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**BOOKS**



General Gehlen today and reviewing WW II troops: Passion for anonymity

## Man Without a Face

THE SERVICE: THE MEMOIRS OF GENERAL REINHARD GEHLEN. Translated by David Irving. 386 pages. World. \$10.

Sacked by Hitler as an intelligence chief for the German General Staff, Reinhard Gehlen surrendered to the Allies in 1945 with 50 steel boxes containing priceless espionage dossiers on the Soviet Union. Soon he was working for the CIA, in a compound near Munich; in 1956 West Germany created her own secret service, the BND, with Gehlen at the head. As such, Gehlen is the supreme cold warrior; the West's eyes and ears in the East after World War II. His memoirs are mostly an ice-water analysis of the undaunted aims and undying intransigence of "Soviet imperialism," a coldly reasoned insistence that the West's true enemy is still the Soviets.

It is an ironic time for such a thesis, with Mr. Nixon just back from Moscow. Gehlen's clarion call to reunite against the Communists is calmly and convincingly argued, but it falls upon a war-weary nation, swept with an undercurrent of neo-isolationism. To top it off, a spate of books on German espionage has recently appeared in the U.S.—two in particular on Gehlen's organization.\* But both these books, while more informative in a sense than Gehlen's own carefully restrained recitation, are more partisan and more suspiciously impassioned—pro and con—than the general's own. The three make a bulky, if comprehensive, package, but it's best straight from the horse's mouth.

**Masks:** These memoirs must be read more for their serious political discourse than for cloak-and-dagger thrills, though Gehlen includes enough to keep a Bond fan fairly satisfied. But there are problems. Gehlen's passion for anonymity



earned him the sobriquet "the man without a face"—and a man without a face could fool us with a hundred masks. Even so, what Gehlen chooses to reveal sounds convincing and consistent, however complicated and interneccine. However selective his facts (he does not mention how badly the BND failed to forecast the Berlin Wall) or however partisan his politics, they are leavened by that steely-eyed objectivity that seems to allow espionage geniuses to weigh triumph and disaster equally.

Gehlen makes controversial charges—some of which were banned in the German edition. He darkly reports that Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik (which Gehlen abhors as give-aways to Moscow and Warsaw for nothing in return) grew mainly from clandestine talks with the Communists in Rome and Munich before he was elected Chancellor. He speaks frankly of the U.S. Bay of Pigs debacle, giving JFK low marks, and nails American sanction of Diem's murder—along with military "half measures"—as perhaps the U.S.'s most tragic mistake in Vietnam. He contends that the Berlin Wall would have come down if the Allies had reacted strongly, and declares that the Soviet Union now hopes to neutralize NATO, consolidate its eastern holdings further and begin encroaching westward while keeping the U.S. bogged down in the sort of troubles Moscow supports in Vietnam and the Middle East.

**Schisms:** Gehlen also avers that the U.S.S.R. will have a Stalin-style dictator after Brezhnev goes, possibly Aleksandr Shelepin (former chief of the Soviet secret police), and that the Peking-Moscow rift is not as permanent as it is cracked up to be: "In any case, the Communist and Socialist movements have years of history, without having suffered

undue injury in them. Gehlen is especially hard on Brandt's moves to accommodate the Soviets, and he will probably be no happier with President Nixon's recent SALT agreements. But he admits that "if Nixon succeeds in his political ambitions toward China, he may yet achieve a termination of the American involvement in Vietnam which would be in the interests of the West."

Gehlen created and nurtured his agency in the belief that intelligence-gathering and espionage are an integral political function and implement of foreign policy. While politicians and diplomats must dissemble and pursue half measures, someone must know what is really going on. Gehlen's service had the first transcript of Khrushchev's electrifying speech denouncing Stalin in 1956 and he predicted the Israeli six-day war to the day of its beginning five days in advance. He isn't the man to tell all, however, and tends to show only the bony hand rather than the whole skeleton in the closet. Even his disputed assertion that Hitler henchman Martin Bormann was a Soviet agent takes only a page and a half. But he can hardly be disputed as an expert on Soviet affairs and intentions, and for these alone he deserves being read carefully.

—S. K. OBERBECK

\*"The General Was a Spy" by Heinz Hagen and Hermann Zölling; "Gehlen: The Man Without a Face" by E. F. Cookridge.